World War I

Comparing Viewpoints

The League of Nations

Near the end of the Great War, United States President Woodrow Wilson wanted to prevent such a catastrophe from ever happening again. He supported an international organization to help nations resolve conflicts without going to war. For the United States to join the proposed League of Nations, the Senate would have to approve a treaty. However, some Congressmen did not share Wilson's goal.

Wilson's most powerful opponents belonged to a group called the "Strong Reservationists." The group's leader, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge recommended many reservations or changes to the treaty, saying they were needed to protect the interests of the United States. Wilson argued that Lodge's changes would make the League of Nations too weak to accomplish its purpose.

Directions: *Read the excerpt from Wilson's speech and the excerpt from Lodge's speech. Then, answer the questions that follow.*

" . . . the counsels of more than twenty nations combined and were rendered unanimous in the adoption of this great instrument [the treaty establishing the League of Nations]. . . . Everybody admits that it is a complete settlement of the matters which led to this war, and that it contains the complete machinery which provides that they shall stay settled."

—speech by President Woodrow Wilson

" . . . our country . . . has great problems of her own to solve, very grim and perilous problems. . . . We would not have our politics distracted and embittered by the dissensions of other lands. We would not have our country's vigor [strength] exhausted . . . by everlasting meddling . . . in every quarrel . . . which afflicts the world.

—speech by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge

1. According to Wilson, what were the world's leading nations in agreement about?

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2. According to Lodge, how would the treaty hurt the United States?

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3. **Detect Points of View** How might Wilson respond to Lodge's claim that the needs of the United States should come before the needs of the rest of the world?

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